

## **AGENDA ITEM VIII**

**PROPOSED NEW ACADEMIC AFFAIRS POLICY 2.18 - MINIMUM  
REQUIREMENTS FOR PLACEMENT INTO ENTRY-LEVEL,  
COLLEGE-LEVEL MATHEMATICS AND ENGLISH**

## **AGENDA ITEM VIII**

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#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Louisiana's state colleges and universities use the results of standardized achievement tests (e.g., ACT or SAT) to determine the placement of junior and/or senior high school students into either credit-earning entry-level Mathematics and English courses or into non-credit-earning developmental courses. The minimum scores on the ACT or SAT that are required, however, vary considerably across campuses, even among those with similar missions. To use two institutions with similar missions as examples, LSU-Shreveport requires a 16 on the Mathematics section of the ACT to place students into entry-level mathematics, while Nicholls State requires a 20. Such disparity also exists across institutions with different missions: a student with an ACT English score as low as 17 can enroll in an entry-level English course at UL-Lafayette or Southeastern, but that same student would have to score a 22 on the ACT English section to enroll in entry-level English at UNO.

The staff's position is that such inconsistencies make little academic sense. This position is supported by the results of a poll taken of other SREB states, where most have taken (or are taking) steps to correct similar situations (see *Appendix I*).

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STAFF TO THE STATEWIDE COUNCIL OF CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICERS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A STATEWIDE POLICY**

To increase the consistency of placement requirements at all state institutions, Mr. Gerard Killebrew suggested a *modus operandi* to the Statewide Council of Chief Academic Officers (SCCAO) at its meeting in September 2002. For a chronicle of the entire process, please see *Appendix II* (attached). The staff clearly expressed its preference for establishing uniform minimum standards across all types of state campuses, but the decision process recommended by the staff allowed for similar *types* of campuses to choose consistent scores within their institutional tier if such scores were thought to be in the best interests of both the institutions and their students. The SCCAO agreed to the process, and work began in December 2002. By July 2003, the wishes of four subcommittees formed to develop the policy were made clear to the staff. The staff was pleased to see that, their different missions notwithstanding, institutions represented by the subcommittees suggested common scores for the placement of students. Since then, the staff has worked to refine the policy.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS POLICY 2.18 - MINIMUM  
REQUIREMENTS FOR PLACEMENT INTO ENTRY-LEVEL, COLLEGE-LEVEL  
MATHEMATICS AND ENGLISH**

The following draft has been circulated among all chief academic officers at state colleges and universities. Only one institution (Bossier Parish Community College) has objected, stating that it wishes to retain higher standards than those established by the draft policy. This objection is one that the staff cannot honor, as it would eliminate the benefit that uniformity would provide.

The draft policy accomplishes much:

1. High school students will now have a clear and consistent goal for the level of achievement expected of them to enter into entry-level Mathematics and English at state colleges and universities.
2. The content and quality of entry-level Mathematics and English coursework across varied campuses is likely to become more uniform.
3. The content and quality of developmental coursework which students may need prior to entering into entry-level Mathematics and English is likely to become more uniform.
4. A greater level of common entry-level academic achievement and experience can be expected across and among campuses.
5. With this more uniform academic experience, campuses are likely to more comfortable in their decisions to readily accept academic credit earned at other institutions.
6. A sufficient amount of time is given to campuses for making necessary changes within their institutions before the policy becomes effective (Fall 2005). This deadline is also consistent with role, scope, and policy mandates of the Master Plan.
7. The deadline also recognizes essential mandates of the 1994 Desegregation Settlement Agreement by delaying implementation of this policy for affected institutions until the term of the Settlement Agreement has expired (January 1, 2006).
8. Institutions which offer non-academic credit Mathematics and English for technical degrees will not be adversely affected by this policy.

**With these observations in mind, the staff whole-heartedly recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee and the Board of Regents approve the proposed draft Academic Affairs Policy 2.18 - Minimum Requirements for Placement into Entry-Level, College-Level Mathematics and English.**

## Academic Affairs Policy 2.18 - Minimum Requirements for Placement into Entry-Level, College-Level Mathematics and English

### **A. Purpose**

This policy is designed to:

- establish clear and consistent goals for the level of academic achievement expected of high school students in two subject areas fundamental to success in college;
- encourage high school students to improve their academic preparation for college;
- increase the retention and graduation rates of students;
- bolster the quality and coherence of academic degrees;
- provide greater similarity of educational experience across a variety of institutions;
- facilitate the transfer of academic credit between institutions.

### **B. Effective Date and Scope**

Effective Fall 2005, requirements of this policy establish uniform standards and procedures for the placement of students in entry-level, college-level courses in Mathematics and English that can be applied toward the following academic undergraduate degrees: Certificate of Applied Science (CAS), Associate of Applied Science (AAS), Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS), Associate (A), Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS), Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), and Bachelor (B).\*

### **C. General Consideration**

A college or university may not establish minimum scores for entry-level, college-level Mathematics or English courses that are higher or lower than those set forth below; however, an institution may require further assessment of students who already meet required minimums to determine their final placement in entry-level, college-level courses in Mathematics and English.

### **D. Requirements for Placement into Entry-Level, College-Level Mathematics**

1. To enroll in an entry-level, college-level Mathematics course designed to fulfill general education requirements of undergraduate academic degrees (listed in B. above), a student must attain a minimum score of either:
  - a. 18 on the Mathematics section of the American College Test (ACT); or
  - b. 440 on the Quantitative portion of the College Board's Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT-1); or
  - c. an appropriate equivalent score on another nationally-recognized assessment exam

(ASSET, COMPASS, ACCUPLACER, etc.).

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\* The effective date for implementation of this policy for those institutions affected by mandates of the 1994 Desegregation Settlement Agreement shall be upon expiration of the term of the Settlement Agreement (i.e., January 1, 2006).

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2. In the case of c. (above), responsibility for the validation and verification of appropriate score equivalencies, and the setting of a minimum required equivalent score, shall rest with the college or university.
3. In lieu of either 1. or 2. (above), a college or university may institute its own alternate placement system, but such a system must be validated. A valid placement system is governed by the principle that students shall meet, at a minimum, the same level of academic achievement as would have been defined by equivalent scores on the ACT and SAT-1. The validity of an alternate placement system shall be determined by the Board of Regents Division of Academic & Student Affairs.

**E. Requirements for Placement into Entry-Level, College-Level English**

1. To enroll in an entry-level, college-level English course designed to fulfill general education requirements of undergraduate academic degrees (listed in B. above), a student must attain a minimum score of either:
  - a. 18 on the English section of the American College Test (ACT); or
  - b. 440 on the Verbal portion of the College Board's Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT-1); or
  - c. an appropriate equivalent score on another nationally-recognized assessment exam (ASSET, COMPASS, ACCUPLACER, etc.).
2. In the case of c. (above), responsibility for the validation and verification of appropriate score equivalencies, and the setting of a minimum required equivalent score, shall rest with the college or university.
3. In lieu of either 1. or 2. (above), a college or university may institute its own alternate placement system, but such a system must be validated. A valid placement system is governed by the principle that students shall meet, at a minimum, the same level of academic achievement as would have been defined by equivalent scores on the ACT and SAT-1. The validity of an alternate placement system shall be determined by the Board of Regents Division of Academic & Student Affairs.

## APPENDIX I

### SREB States: Statewide Freshman Math/English Placement Policies

	Policy	Effective	ACT Math	ACT English
Arkansas	Statewide Freshman Assessment and Placement Policy (rev. 1991)	Fall 1988	19	19
Mississippi	Statewide Admissions Standards Policy	Fall 2001	If ACT taken, a 16 (composite) is the lowest permissible score to be combined with GPA, etc.	See side note.
Oklahoma	Statewide Remedial Education Policy	June 28, 1996	19	19
Florida	Statewide policy	Fall 2000	19	17
Kentucky	Statewide Mandatory Placement Policy	Fall 2001	18	18
West Virginia	Statewide policy	August 1, 2002	19 and no higher	18 and no higher
Tennessee	Statewide Developmental Education Policy	October 1, 2003	19	19
Georgia	Statewide policy (SAT only)	October 1, 2002	Varies	Varies
Louisiana	Under development.			
Alabama	Under development			
North Carolina	Under development			
Maryland	Under development			
Delaware	No statewide policy.			
South Carolina	No statewide policy			
Texas	No statewide policy			
Virginia	No statewide policy			

## APPENDIX II

### Process for the Development of Minimum Requirements for Placement into Entry-Level, College-Level Mathematics and English

The staff observes that the 2001 Master Plan provides a framework within which such standards can be developed. Specifically, the Master Plan stipulates the classification of all institutions of higher

education into one of four levels, based on the rigor of admission requirements (which are to be fully implemented by Fall 2005). The four levels are currently identified as follows:

Flagship	-	LSU
Statewide	-	UNO, La Tech, ULL
Regional	-	LSUS, Grambling*, NW, ULM, McNeese, Nicholls, SUBR, SLU, SUNO*, LSU-A**
Open Admissions	-	SUSBO, LSU-E, Baton Rouge CC, Delgado CC, Nunez CC, Louisiana Delta CC, South Louisiana CC, River Parishes CC, Bossier Parish CC, Fletcher TCC, Sowela TCC, the LTC

### **SUGGESTED PLAN OF ACTION**

It would seem logical, therefore, to develop entry-level, college-level English and Mathematics placement standards by using the institutional levels already defined by the Master Plan. Specifically, the staff suggests:

1. Four separate subcommittees of the SCCAO shall be established; these subcommittees shall be composed of the chief academic officer (or a chosen representative) from each school within an institutional level. The subcommittee shall select a chair who will direct and oversee all subcommittee activities. Initially, the chair of each subcommittee shall ensure that all members of the subcommittee are fully informed of the work of the Louisiana Association of Developmental Education (LADE), which has already performed significant assessments in this area. Thereafter, a period of time shall be given to members before the first meeting of each subcommittee so that members may fully absorb LADE information and survey their campuses regarding appropriate standards.
2. Prior to the onset of discussion and negotiation, all should agree that the most appropriate measurement instrument to use in the establishment of these standards are student ACT scores (and SAT equivalents) for English and Mathematics. The staff refers again to the appendices which indicate the overwhelming use of ACT English/Math scores in those SREB states which have already adopted such standards. It would seem appropriate to follow the same practice. Similarly, no ACT score lower than 18 should be considered as a minimum for placement into entry-level, college-level English and Mathematics, regardless of institutional level. This too reflects a consensus of minimum acceptable scores used by other SREB states. Finally, it should be

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\* Currently an open admissions institution, as provided by mandates of the Desegregation Settlement Agreement; however, this agreement terminates at the end of 2005. Thereafter, the institution must meet regional admission standards by 2010.

\*\* Currently an open admissions institution, but with recent authorization to move to four-year status. LSU-A must meet regional admission standards by 2007.



understood that once such standards are adopted, individual institutions may not require scores above those agreed upon for their institutional level.

3. By December 1, 2002, each subcommittee shall hold its first meeting. The subcommittee chair shall schedule additional meetings thereafter until each subcommittee has agreed upon a set of standards.
4. By May 15, 2003, each subcommittee shall submit its recommended set of standards to the Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs. Immediately thereafter, the Associate Commissioner shall schedule meetings of the chairs of each subcommittee. The chairs shall meet as a group to examine whether standards across institutional levels are appropriately scaled. The chairs will be charged with the responsibility to resolve any academic disagreements and/or procedural problems.
5. By August 15, 2003, the subcommittee chairs shall present a coherent and comprehensive system of standards to the Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs. The recommended date for implementation of entry-level, college-level English/Math placement standards shall be consistent with that of institutional admission standards required by the Master Plan.
6. At a September meeting of the SCCAO, the Associate Commissioner shall present recommendations of the subcommittee chairs to the entire membership for action.
7. Recommendations of the SCCAO regarding this matter will be referred to the Academic and Student Affairs Committee and to the full Board of Regents for consideration during a subsequent meeting in Fall 2003.